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## **News Release**

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### **Former fugitive sentenced for preparing false tax returns**

After evading authorities for almost four years, a tax preparer was finally sentenced yesterday in federal court for tax crimes. Yahya Muhumed Shakal was sentenced to 72 months in prison and one year of supervised release on four counts of aiding and assisting in the preparation of false tax returns. He was sentenced by United States District Court Judge Donovan Frank in St. Paul.

Shakal was indicted on April 13, 2005. After his initial appearance, he was released from custody on bond, at which time, he fled the jurisdiction. He was apprehended by Canadian authorities in Edmonton, Alberta, and extradited to the U.S. in February 2009.

“At the Internal Revenue Service, we believe everyone who files a tax return should take full advantage of all credits provided by law; however, no one is entitled to an undeserved windfall,” said Julio La Rosa, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the IRS-Criminal Investigation Division, St. Paul office. “Preparers who are caught promoting such fraudulent schemes will be punished. And, if the return is bad, the taxpayer whose name is on the return will be responsible for paying the additional taxes, penalties, and interest.”

On April 15, 2009, Shakal pled guilty to the four counts filed against him. In doing so, he admitted he willfully aided and assisted in the preparation and presentation of fraudulent federal tax returns. Shakal acknowledged that in 2003 and 2004, he was a tax preparer who did business under the names of Amal Tax Return and Salama Tax Service in Minneapolis. During that time, he prepared and filed more than 1,000 false federal and state individual income tax returns on behalf of others.

Among his false tax claims, Shakal filed for excessive fuel tax credits on individual federal tax returns for tax years 2002 and 2003. In each of those cases, he prepared a Form 4136, Credit for Federal Tax Paid on Fuels, on which he claimed that the corresponding taxpayer had used gasoline for nontaxable uses, such as off-highway business and exports. In truth, however, he knew those taxpayers had not used gasoline for those purposes or any other nontaxable purposes.

More than \$2 million in fraudulent fuel tax credits were claimed on the more than 1,000 tax returns prepared by Shakal.

This case was the result of an investigation by the IRS-Criminal Investigation Division, with assistance from the Minnesota Department of Revenue. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael L. Cheever.

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*Per U.S. Department of Justice policy, the U.S. Attorney's Office is not allowed to provide the age and city of residence for defendants charged in criminal tax cases.*